

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 10/23/2009 has been entered.

Response to Amendment

Amendment received on 10/23/2009 is acknowledged and entered. Claims 7-13 and 15-41 have been canceled. Claims 1 and 14 have been amended. Claims 1-6, 14 and 42 are currently pending in the application.

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a personal interview with an Applicant's representative Jacob Mattis (Reg. No.: 58,833) on Wednesday, December 12, 2009.

The application has been amended as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for short term trading in gas, the method comprising the steps of:

obtaining storage rights to at least a portion of one or more low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities;

connecting a natural gas pipeline directly to the interior of the one or more low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities, ~~wherein the one or more low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities operate at pressures in the range of 20 to 80 bars;~~

maintaining the pressure of the natural gas in the pipeline at nominally the same pressure as that of the one or more low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities, thereby allowing for flow both into the low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities from the natural gas pipeline and from the natural gas pipeline to the low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities through a single natural gas pipeline, and enabling rapid reversal of flow direction in a time less than twenty-four hours, such that when the supply of the gas is greater than the demand for the gas, a gas purchaser may divert a gas facility computer system configured for controlling gas flow into and out of the low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities ~~diverts a portion of the natural gas in from the natural gas pipeline to the low pressure underground salt formation gas storage facility facilities from the gas pipeline by using or creating a nominal pressure increase in the natural gas pipeline and when the~~

Art Unit: 3628

demand of the natural gas is greater than the supply of the natural gas, ~~the~~ gas purchaser may divert the gas facility computer system diverts a portion of the gas from the low pressure underground salt formation ~~gas storage facility~~ facilities into the natural gas pipeline by using or creating a nominal pressure decrease in the natural gas of the low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities; and

using a trading system configured to make short term trades related to natural gas to making ~~make~~ at least one short term trade related to natural gas ~~by using the one or more low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities~~ by receiving gas into or providing gas out of the one or more low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities using the gas facility computer system, wherein the trading system is operable to conduct at least one additional short term trade within a time less than twenty-four hours using the rapid reversal of flow direction.

2. (Previously Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said short term of said at least one short term trade is less than 24 hours.
3. (Original) The method of Claim 2, wherein said short term is less than 12 hours.
4. (Original) The method of Claim 3, wherein said short term is less than 6 hours.
5. (Original) The method of Claim 4, wherein said short term is less than one hour.
6. (Original) The method of Claim 5, wherein said short term is less than thirty minutes.

Claims 7-13 (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) A system operable for use in short term trading in gas, said system comprising:

at least one low pressure underground salt formation storage facility operating in the pressure range of 20 to 80 bars;

a natural gas pipeline directly connected with the at least one low pressure underground salt formation storage facility having natural gas therein with at a pressure in the pipeline maintained at nominally the same pressure as that the pressure of the natural gas stored in the shallow depth at least one low pressure underground salt formation storage facility, allowing for flow both into the at least one low pressure underground salt formation storage facility from the natural gas pipeline and from the natural gas pipeline to the at least one low pressure underground salt formation storage facility through a single natural gas pipeline, and enabling rapid reversal of flow direction in a time less than twenty-four hours;

a gas facility computer system operable for controlling gas flow into and out of said at least one low pressure underground salt formation storage facility on a short term basis by compressing or decompressing natural gas in the pipeline to cause diversion of the portion of the natural gas to or from the storage facility, such that when the supply of the gas is greater than the demand for the gas, the gas facility computer system diverts a portion of the natural gas from the natural gas pipeline to the at least one low pressure underground salt formation, and when the demand of the natural gas is greater than the

Art Unit: 3628

supply of the natural gas, the gas facility computer system diverts a portion of the natural gas from the at least one low pressure underground salt formation to the natural gas pipeline; and

~~such that when the supply of the gas is greater than the demand for the gas , a gas purchaser may divert a portion of the gas in the gas pipeline to the storage facility from the gas pipeline and when the demand of the gas is greater than the supply of the gas, the gas purchaser may divert a portion of the gas from the storage facility into the gas pipeline;~~

a trading system operable for making configured to make at least one short term trades trade related to natural gas by receiving gas into or providing gas out of the at least one low pressure underground salt formation storage facility using the gas facility computer system, wherein the trading system is operable to conduct at least one additional short term trade within a time less than twenty-four hours using the rapid reversal of flow direction, and

~~a gas facility computer system operable for controlling gas flow into and out of said at least one low pressure underground salt formation storage facility on a short term basis by compressing or decompressing natural gas in the pipeline to cause diversion of the portion of the gas to or from the storage facility.~~

Claims 15-41 (Cancelled)

Art Unit: 3628

42. (Previously Amended) The method according to Claim 1 wherein the step of making at least one short term trade related to natural gas by using the one or more low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities comprises reversing an existing flow of gas between the pipeline and at least one of the low pressure underground salt formation storage facilities.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-6, 14 and 42 are allowed.

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Applicant's arguments presented on pages 6-8 of the response filed 10/13/2009 are deemed to be persuasive. For the reasons presented by Applicant, claims 1-6, 14 and 42 are deemed to be allowable over the best prior art of record (Kennelley in view of Bishop and further in view of Garnier).

While NPL search has been conducted (See search notes attached), a pertinent non-patent literature has not been located.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submission should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reason for Allowance".

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Igor Borissov whose telephone number is 571-272-6801. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John W. Hayes can be reached on 571-272-6708. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/Igor N. Borissov/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3628
01/02/2010